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ABSTRACT

Interpreting, or oral translation, deals exclusively and intensively with language in action. The process develops and exercises intellectual, personal, and linguistic skills. However, its introduction into second language curricula would require changing expectations and strategies. The syllabus for a course component in interpreting should have two levels, one addressing language and one addressing technique (listening, comprehending, storing, recalling, presenting). The classroom atmosphere must be lively and supportive to build student confidence. The progression through levels of difficulty must be steady but also provide enough success to be encouraging. Interpreting is a curricular complement to both written translation and conversation, and it can make a great contribution to active, intensive learning of the spoken language. An interpreting syllabus designed to prepare students for study abroad and subsequent advanced language study illustrates its role in the second language curriculum. (MSE)

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THE EAR HAS ITS REASONS--INTERPRETING AND THE MODERN LANGUAGES CURRICULUM

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Relevance and realism: if these two criteria are indeed useful gauges of the appropriateness of the foreign languages learned and used by undergraduates, it would be reasonable to suppose that curriculum designers take them into account in determining the content and balance of modern languages degree courses. And so, to a greater or lesser extent, they do. Not in so many words, of course, since the people who draft the brochures tend to shudder at the mere thought of introducing the idea of relevance, a word which summons up uncomfortable associations, irksome references to another and much wider debate. Yet the language curriculum debate can, when looked at with sufficient perspective, be seen to be that wider debate writ small. So, although in the departmental brochures and modern languages syllabi the word itself may not appear, its spirit suffuses them through frequent references to 'modern' approaches, 'contemporary' studies, 'current' issues, and numerous allusions to 'applied' or 'practical' language work.

These are exciting times for linguists. The ferment of experimentation which followed upon the Robbins expansion is showing no sign of dying down. On the contrary, emphases are changing and new combinations of degree subjects are emerging - such as languages with law, theatre studies or management sciences - while more and more universities and polytechnics are experimenting with a steadily growing range of activities previously regarded as essentially vocational language skills. This latter phenomenon -the startling spread of the so-called applied language activities (ALAs) - is one of the most remarkable developments in language studies this century, and so it is important that the relevance of these to the modern languages degree should be rigorously tested and fully discussed.

PURE AND APPLIED

If by 'applied' one means applicable - that is, useful, usable in a given practical or even vocational situation - then the epithet clearly does refer to such language-processing activities as preparing an inter-language abstract, summary,' report or brief; producing an analysis of a dossier of foreign language material; translating, editing, revising, copy-writing; producing an aural-written summary or an aural-oral report or précis; ad hoc interpreting and conference interpreting; simulations and games involving, for example, interpreting - or indeed simulations involving a combination of any or all of these activities. But 'applied' does not necessarily mean post facto - that is, subsequent to and dependent upon the acquisition of a generalised language competence: to take such a view would be to ignore this ferment, this surge of interest[1] in fresh approaches and new possibilities for the foreign language

curriculum. Unquestionably, the traditional base of the modern languages degree - literature, philosophy, philology, essay, prose composition, literary translation - is broadening, and in some places broadening rapidly, to admit some of these applied language activities.

It is interesting to speculate why this is happening, and among the many possible reasons there is one in particular - probably the most obvious - which recognises those two criteria referred to earlier: relevance and realism. At a time when economic and political pressures are growing and international communications are expanding faster than they have ever done before, the inappropriateness of an exclusively literary, formal and historical knowledge of a foreign language, one gained essentially through the written word, could scarcely be more apparent.

Yet this swing of the pendulum away from the traditional pursuits of modern linguists which has been gaining momentum since the mid-60s cannot have been motivated by vocational considerations alone. Of all modern languages graduates going into employment, considerably fewer than 3% take up posts as full-time linguists (translators, interpreters, information officers, researchers, etc.), and in any case such vacancies as do occur are tending to be filled by diplomates of the handful of institutions which run postgraduate courses in interpreting or translating or both.[2] The liberating and invigorating effect of some of the post-Robbins experiments has no doubt played a significant part in boosting the popularity of these more practical language courses, while fashion and consumer pressure[3] have also helped the pendulum on its way.

From all this experimentation an interesting mosaic of degree courses is taking shape. It would of course be unrealistic to expect every one of the many experiments in course design to prove completely successful, but given the inherently cautious attitude towards innovation throughout higher education in Britain, there is every chance that a good proportion of them will produce competent, adaptable, educated graduate linguists.

Where caution about this vogue in oral-based activities does exist, it often reflects scepticism about the extent to which such a graduate can indeed legitimately be called 'educated'. After all, say the sceptics, one cannot put a quart into a pint pot, and if time is to be spent in the acquisition of a number of what appear to be new tool skills it must be at the expense of some at least of the background studies in the humanities which made the traditional arts graduates what they were.[4]

It would not be appropriate here to dwell upon definitions of the term 'educated' as applied to modern linguists, nor to discuss the 'modernity' of their studies today (that is being done elsewhere[5]) but it could be useful to put one question to those sceptics who are loth to concede any changes in a curriculum already crowded with valid and satisfying pursuits. The question is this:

> Could there be anything in the claim that these oral-related activities, far from being mere practical skills which may or may not have some ulterior practical or vocational application, are actually in themselves processes which, when incorporated appropriately into the modern languages syllabus, can and do contribute to the undergraduate's intellectual and personal as well as linguistic development?[6]

The question could have some important implications for both curriculum design and pedagogical practice, and it is with these that the present paper is concerned. In particular, it is proposed to consider the teaching function of just one of these applied language activities, the one usually considered by students and teachers alike to present a special challenge, interpreting.[7]

LANGUAGE IN USE

This approach to the teaching and learning of modern languages could be regarded as a natural product of the growing European interest in language in use, as distinct from the North American concern with language as system. In Europe the focus has shifted away from the Chomskyan preoccupation with the putative language of 'the ideal speaker-listener' in a completely homogeneous speech community[8], and has moved more towards a concern with what happens when language is actually used in a heterogeneous speech community. In other words, it is moving towards a recognition of language as function - a development which teachers, grappling with the realities of trying to inculcate real language systems in real students, could not fail to welcome. This shift of emphasis was no doubt influenced by the seminal work in the early 1970s of the Council of Europe Language project team (Wilkins, Trim, Van Ek, Richterich) and by the work of Halliday, who underlined the social and essentially interactive nature of language; it was reinforced particularly by that of Hymes who insisted 'that there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless.'[9] As Janice Yalden pointed out, Hymes, by proposing that the definition of competence should include the concept of communicative function, 'points the way to the necessary expansion of what a second-language teaching programme must entail'.[10] And when Hymes, in reaching for a theory of language use, also proposed that the two notions of grammaticality and acceptability were not enough for judging a communicative act in a given culture, and insisted that four criteria had to be satisfied (namely, that the utterance must be formally possible, feasible, appropriate, and actually performed)[11] it was as though the postillion had finally been banished from the language classroom; in doing so Hymes gave fresh heart to those teachers who, at every level, were seeking confirmation that relevance and realism were after all theoretically respectable as well as pragmatically obvious objectives.

WIND OF CHANGE

The emergence over the past ten years or so of such a view of communicative competence coincided with and to some extent probably contributed to a growing interest in interpreting at undergraduate level. Some institutions, however, had introduced interpreting or other applied language activities

several years earlier,[12] so there must have been other factors at work as well. One likely explanation, already mentioned, is that of the post-Robbins wind of change: if this was clearing the way for imaginative links across disciplines, how absurd it would be not to envisage a relaxation of the rigidly compartmentalised structure of, say, modern languages degrees. But change, or even the thought of change, does not necessarily come so easily. Although the long succession of methods and approaches to language teaching since the 1930s (including the grammar-translation, audio-visual, structuro-global and direct methods, programmed texts, laboratory drills, psycho-drama, subconscious acquisition, suggestopedia, associative learning, computer-assisted programs and so on) may in varying degrees have had their effect in schools and colleges, the fact is that until quite recently language work in higher education had changed remarkably little.[13] The academic's conditioned preference for compartments and specialisations militates against the introduction of new practices, as does the implicit - or even, in places, explicit - hierarchy of esteem among specialisations which places the acquisition of a foreign language qua language well below the salt.

Almost certainly the decision to introduce these new activities into the degree syllabus did not spring from any one theory of language or language use or from any one methodological approach. To quote Janice Yalden again: 'There are now so many factors that need to be taken into consideration in teaching language and language usage that they cannot be handled in a satisfactory way within the conceptual framework that any one 'method' provides.[14] It seems likely that for most of the institutions where interpreting is taught to undergraduates today it is in the syllabus at least partly because of the contribution it is considered to make to all-round language competence. Experienced teachers, while perhaps accepting on the theoretical level a broadly defined communicative competence as one of the objectives of advanced language study, may also recognise pragmatically the role of language in use as a means of reaching that objective. And it is here that one can see most clearly the particular appeal of interpreting as a language-acquisition activity.

CHANGING EXPECTATIONS

The act of interpretation deals exclusively and intensively with language in action. The process necessarily develops and exercises intellectual, personal and linguistic skills, these being functions and capacities which, being useful in themselves, are of course also applicable outside the context of interpreting. Such a claim is a large one, and one which, if true, cannot fail to influence curriculum design, so it would be appropriate to attempt to identify some of the processes employed in the teaching of interpreting which are thought to have these effects. But first it might also be useful to enquire further into the spectacular and sudden irruption - sudden, that is, in terms of the usual pace of change in higher education - of such a range of unfamiliar language activities into modern languages degree studies.

This irruption is perhaps a sign that academics are prepared to consider taking the teaching of the language itself rather more seriously. Could it be

that we are taking note of the changes which are occurring at either end of the undergraduate spectrum - on the one hand changes in the nature of the A-level output, and on the other hand new expectations of what a language graduate ought to be capable of doing[15] - and that these changes mean that language teaching will have to be done well if it is going to satisfy a more sophisticated consumer in a more competitive market?[16]

Just how real and widespread these changes are will already be apparent to those academics in modern languages departments whose additional responsibilities include admissions, graduate careers and industrial experience or other 'sandwich' placements of students who spend a year abroad. Frequent contacts in such capacities with administrators, researchers, sixth-formers, language advisors, inspectors, professional linguists and innumerable employers of linguists have convinced the present writer that there is a growing expectation that all graduate linguists - and not just the exceptional five or ten per cent - should be capable of active, spontaneous and varied use of their foreign languages. The sting in the tail - and the challenge for curriculum design - is that these same people also tend to assume that such modern languages graduates will also possess the same intellectual and cultural strengths as their predecessors.

Here a reference to market forces - the mere mention of which can normally be relied upon to provoke a sharp intake of breath at any conference in any university - need not be taken in a narrow commercial sense. Interestingly enough, the link between the market-place and academic research is becoming more apparent. Today, a researcher can often not afford to wait until a conference comes up or a paper comes out: it is more and more a matter of going to see people, persuading experts to part with data or opinions now rather than in six or twelve months' time, tackling informants in their own language, infecting others with the researcher's own enthusiasm, recognising and circumventing prejudices, understanding national or even regional peculiarities - all of these clearly being activities which demand language competence of a high order.

A PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY

We have seen in the preceding paper what this target activity, interpreting, consists of. Put very succinctly, by the time of the final degree examinations a student could be expected to demonstrate the ability to interpret normal discourse in the consecutive mode into and out of the foreign language, and in the simultaneous mode into the mother tongue only. If such a complex performance is to be taught, the teacher needs a strategy. Stated in the broadest terms, a pedagogical strategy within which such an objective could be attained would aim to do three things:

> firstly, to develop, enrich and consolidate the student's language base in both the foreign language and in the mother tongue (concentrating mainly but not exclusively on contemporary language and culture);

secondly, to promote a particular awareness of context, nuance and implication (an essential attribute of this type of linguistic Janus, who looks back to analyse the context and purpose of an utterance and forward to produce the precise effect the proper mediation of that utterance demands);

thirdly, to develop the communication skills, the stamina and the specific language-processing techniques which the act of interpretation requires.

The syllabus for such a course component could be conceived as having two levels, those of language and technique: the **operational syllabus**, which deals with the macro- and micro-skills of the interpreting process (the techniques of listening, comprehending, storing, recalling, presenting), and the **language syllabus** which defines the semantic, functional and formal elements appropriate to such activities.

As its name implies, the operational or technique-developing syllabus concentrates upon providing opportunities for students to practise each of the specific language-processing skills involved in the various phases of an interpretation. At times it will be convenient to concentrate upon the analysis phase (the techniques of listening, comprehending, sifting, classifying), while at others it will be necessary to develop and exercise techniques for storing information (memory processes, keywording and mnenomic devices, verbal and imaginal coding; note-taking systems); at frequent intervals, but especially once basic competence has been acquired and confidence is beginning to grow, it will be appropriate to give special attention to the synthesis phase (recalling, ordering, presenting). But this is not to suggest that these phases should be dealt with in this - or for that matter any other - particular order. Indeed, concentration on the various processes is likely to be systematic only to the extent that during, say, the final eighteen months of a course the teacher would take care to ensure that the whole range of such processes is adequately covered and that each is periodically reviewed. Experience suggests that the actual moment when each micro-skill receives attention is best dictated not by a linear syllabus but by opportunistic exploitation of a current event, a particularly appropriate piece of exercise material or a particularly apposite and illustrative performance on the part of a student.

But these language-processing skills, techniques and capacities - in other words, the objects of the operational syllabus - would of course have nothing to work on without their raw material, namely the foreign language and the mother tongue. The language syllabus for interpreting differs very little from one designed to meet the generalised language-learning needs of the modern linguist, and could also be seen as having two levels, the now-familiar levels of function and notion. The relevance of these two concepts to the act of interpreting is brought out by two obvious questions. At the level of language as function, one asks 'How must these concepts be formulated in the target language so as to express what the source language utterance is

seeking to do?' And at the level of language notions one asks 'What does the mediator (interpreter) need to know in order to express the ideational content of the utterance?'

Halliday's four basic functions of language (interpersonal, ideational, textual and logical)[17] together with Wilkins's six categories of communicative function (judgement and evaluation, suasion, argument, concession, personal emotions, emotional relations)[18] are useful pointers for speculating on the particular interaction of notion, function and form which occurs in interpreting, while at a more practical level they provide some very useful avenues of approach to language syllabus design, not only for interpreters but also for the generality of practical linguists.[19] When one considers the nature of the act of interpretation and looks at some of the ways of teaching it, it becomes apparent that the learner here could be exposed to some particularly rich and unusually complete language acquisition experiences, for in satisfactorily mediating an utterance the interpreter is obliged to take account of the total context, registering all the things that are going on in addition to the mere transmission of factual content. As Wilkins says, à propos of language users in general, 'The speaker's purpose is no less a matter of what he is doing with the language than of what he is reporting through it',[20] an idea taken up by Yalden, who observed (in connection with the communicative syllabus), 'When we speak our own language, or any other that we know well, we concern ourselves with much more than linguistic accuracy.'[21] And if that is true for 'ordinary' communication how much truer must it be for the specific act of inter-language mediation?

Whether speaking or listening, when we use our own language we tend automatically to keep a running account of the total context, noting on the way the functional intention of every utterance, registering those moments 'where more is meant than meets the ear.'[22] Thanks to our secure cultural base and our high level of language competence we are almost always right in our assessment of what is going on, and this tends to obscure the fact that this constant checking and up-dating is indeed happening. When an advanced language learner is using a language which he knows less than perfectly, however, the need for these clues to context and function appears at a much more conscious level; fortunately, in most language exchange situations feedback may well be available to indicate how successful an utterance has been, and there may even be opportunities to put things right or to 'home in' on the target in a subsequent exchange. What makes interpretation a particular challenge, of course, is that the pressure is on not only to mediate a source language utterance but to get its target language equivalent right first time, and without any apparent pause for thought. To perform this complex operation the interpreter has had to develop certain reflexes, reflexes which every advanced linguist already possesses but usually exercises in a much more leisurely or sporadic fashion.

Given that an act of interpretation seeks to convey and recreate in a different language and culture the content, intention, flavour and effect of an utterance, the interpretation will normally be the equivalent of sustained, natural, spontaneous speech, and will exercise the functional roles of adult

language referred to by Halliday, namely the interpersonal (establishing, maintaining or specifying relations between people), ideational (transmitting information), textual (providing the shape, tone and texture of discourse as required by the situation) and logical (expressing logical relationships).[23] Such a performance, complex and even daunting though it may appear, has been shown by experience to be well within the reach of the serious undergraduate linguist.[24] Experience also suggests that the student stands the best chance of acquiring the target skills if the syllabus is carefully graded.

A TEACHING SYLLABUS

So if it is true that there are good reasons - beyond the straightforward promotion of an applied skill - for teaching undergraduates the skills of interpreting, the question becomes one of defining the elements of a teaching syllabus. In such a brief survey as this the discussion of syllabus content must necessarily be limited;[25] all that will be attempted is an outline of a possible work-scheme covering a total of two years (this being the length of that part of the Bradford course during which formal tuition in interpreting is provided).[26] Table 1 overleaf summarises one approach to the first five weeks. Possible follow-up activities in weeks 6 to 14 (when the students start their year abroad) and subsequent work in Years III and IV are sketched in Tables 2 to 5, attached as Appendices A to D (pp. 107-111)

Table 1

Work-Scheme, Year II Interpreting* — Weeks 1-5 (Oct-Nov)
BA Hons Modern Languages — 2 hours per week.

Weeks 1-2 Introduction. Link with aural comprehension and oral précis work in Year I. Look ahead to objectives: video examples of straightforward consecutive and simultaneous interpreting; discussion of skills involved and strategies for acquiring them. Group exercises (pairs or solo): short sentences, FL-E, memory only (heterogeneous news items, conversational exchanges, etc, with high information content. Eg. 'Not another hijacking, surely!/ I'm not quite sure that I agree with you, actually./ Oh, all right then!/ Is this the only room you have left?/ It's not just a question of finding the money for the trip, although of course I've got to admit that that is a big consideration./ I've never really thought of them in that light./ That's pretty unlikely, really - they've always been very quick to condemn car-bombings and things like that, haven't they?')

Weeks 3-4 Similar items as 'quickies' in 5-15 min. warm-up session, for memory only work, in group or pairs; followed by longer items with note-taking in groups, pairs or solo or in Language Laboratory (LL) with own criticism and tutor's comments. Discuss individual's memory-span limits.

Weeks 4-5 Group:

1. 5-15 min 'quickies', memory only, pairs and solo.
2. Discuss note-taking. Work-sheet exercises, solo or pair versions, with OHP presentation of solo performers' notes. Principles of notation (AKLAS: analysis, keywording, layout, abbreviation, symbolisation). Demonstration: one student tells anecdote, all take notes, interpreters perform solo or in pairs, compare and discuss notes on OHP. Further exercises, with occasional OHP illustration. Discuss essential starter kit of concepts.
3. Audio-workroom exercises for developing memory and practising numerals, paraphrase, selection, reduction, abbreviation. Further task: listen to daily news broadcasts on own radio or in audio-workroom.

(* Note: Consecutive only. Simultaneous is introduced in Year III)

THE RESOURCES QUESTION

Although the subject of technical resources to support such work is dealt with in some detail elsewhere,[27] perhaps a very brief mention might be made of it here, if only to dispel an understandable misconception. It is sometimes said that only those institutions blessed with an abundance of specialised facilities can seriously undertake to teach interpreting. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. For the purposes of undergraduate teaching it is perfectly feasible to teach interpreting - and to do so effectively, efficiently and enjoyably - with equipment already commonplace in all language departments. Obviously, any institution or department offering a course leading to a postgraduate diploma in interpreting must be able to demonstrate and simulate international conferences, and indeed must provide its students with regular and intensive experience of interpreting under actual conference conditions; such a vocational objective does indeed require special equipment.[28] But there can be few if any modern languages departments which would have difficulty in providing the following very modest scale of facilities:

a. Language laboratory, preferably with sufficient space for group teaching,[29] or, failing this, a seminar-room sufficiently close to allow the lesson to move readily from group work to laboratory activities.
b. OHP.
c. Private tape study facilities ('spare' language laboratory spaces, home loan cassettes and recorders, audio library).
d. (Desirable options)
   Video replay equipment
   Audio cassette recorder for group work.

PRACTICE AND PARTICIPATION

So we have an outline syllabus and a necessary minimum of technical facilities. But before considering the actual lesson it might be useful to remind ourselves that with spoken language, as with most complex performative acts, there is no substitute for actually doing it. While it is possible and, as already mentioned, at times useful to isolate particular elements of a performance, it is generally sound practice so to arrange things that as many students as possible do as much actual interpreting as possible on as many occasions as possible. Inevitably - especially in the early stages - many of these utterances will be far from perfect, but the important thing is to build a framework of actual performance experience upon which to improve. So a useful policy, especially early on, is to make a point of encouraging each and every attempt, urging students to commit themselves, to get started, to handle the ideas they can manage, and not to hold back because of a problem they can see coming up; they may even solve the problem when it comes, but in any case if they do get stuck, then at least a significant part of the task will be behind them, and will most probably prove to be useful experience to build on later. If it can be established that every

attempt tends to make the next one easier, and that a partial success is better than baulking at the obstacle in advance and therefore producing nothing, then a major advance will have been made in the psychological preparation of the student for this language activity - and for others, of course.

THE CRITICAL FACTOR

It almost goes without saying that atmosphere in such teaching sessions is also of critical importance. No-one enjoys making mistakes in public, and in this respect intelligent, able, keen students who are accustomed to doing well in some or most of their endeavours are as human as the rest of us. Yet in a group activity of this sort mistakes or imperfections are a virtual certainty, even with the most scrupulously graded material, and especially when the conduct of a class is particularly lively and opportunistic. So if keen and often very self-critical students are to encourage themselves and each other to 'have a go at it', the atmosphere must be good-humoured, lively and supportive, which is not to say unserious: there needs to be an underlying note of earnestness which says, 'I think you can make a good attempt at this one - show me!'

The group dynamics of such classes have already been mentioned. It would be difficult to over-state the importance of a supportive, encouraging, confidence-building atmosphere in such work. And work it must be, but not just any work: practice is good, but carefully-graded practice is better. It long ago became fashionable to scoff at patterns, drills and such horrors as operant conditioning, but some good came out of the frenzy of programming and drilling that marked the 'sixties, and we have to recognise that one of the contributions that the behaviourists made to the theory and practice of teaching was a convincing demonstration of something that good teachers had always intuitively known - the importance of success in learning.

STEADY PROGRESSION

Interpreting is a difficult act, but not an impossible one. As every student knows, the teacher who consistently sets performance targets beyond the learner's reach is not necessarily a brilliant and inspiring mentor who knows the value of high standards: he might instead be insensitive, arrogant, negligent, or incompetent - or worse. No, in this activity, where the aspiring performer is so vulnerable (is there in fact any other language learning activity where the learner is so exposed?) it is vital that the teacher selects, grades and handles exercise material so that while maintaining a steady progression in the level of difficulty he ensures that there are enough successful elements within a given performance to do three things:

a. to provide positive encouragement to the performer;
b. to permit a realistic rhythm of performance to emerge;
c. to enable effort to be sustained for long enough to ensure that stamina builds up progressively.

The link between difficulty level and fatigue is often overlooked, especially by the 'throw 'em in at the deep end' school. Interpreting, combining as it does intense mental effort with varying degrees of stress, is among the most tiring of all the activities undertaken by the advanced linguist. Stamina is therefore essential, and while it is certain that extensive and regular practice can build up the capacity to sustain a performance, exhaustingly intensive sessions or extremely difficult exercises can be counter-productive, particularly in the early stages.

It is here that one can see the greatest difference between the approach found in certain professional interpreters' schools and that of those undergraduate schools which include interpreting in the curriculum. There is no reason, indeed, why their approaches should be the same: the former, in the main, recruit ready-made linguists at graduate level or above and have a very short time in which to prepare the exceptionally gifted ones for employment in a very demanding profession, so it is not surprising that only the fittest can be allowed to survive; the latter, on the other hand, see interpreting as one component among several in a balanced educational process. Thus it could be argued that brutal sink-or-swim methods have no place in an undergraduate school where the course curriculum and the admissions policy are such as to permit the assumption that virtually every student enrolled is potentially capable of acquiring a satisfactory level of competence in all of the skills prescribed for the degree.

The normally assiduous undergraduate is in principle expected to succeed. But what constitutes success in this particular activity? As with any language utterance, in an act of interpretation there is much more going on than the mere reporting of ideational content: a pedagogical strategy for interpreting must therefore embrace the whole spectrum of events and situations associated with that act; it must ensure that the learner not only becomes progressively more aware of the total context but also becomes increasingly adept at identifying its most significant elements and adjusting the interpretation to take account of them.

The contribution which learning to perform such a process must make to comprehension and communication, and thus to all-round language competence, could scarcely be more obvious. Yet the teacher's concern that an interpretation should be just as rich, just as appropriate in its own way as the original utterance (in other words, a recreation of that reality) has led some sceptics to focus upon the 'second-hand' nature of the interpreted message, and from this to conclude that the intellectual processes involved are somehow inferior to those employed in spontaneous original speech. Such a partial view need not detain us here, but it does have the merit of raising an interesting point for the curriculum debate.

VALUED COMPLEMENTS

The extent to which interpreting can be said to complement other academic activities has already been commented upon, but it might not be out of place to refer more closely to its particular relation to the two elements in the

curriculum with which it has most in common - the translation seminar and the conversation class with the foreign language assistant. It might be useful in fact to take a further example from Bradford, where interpreting is part of the language 'core' of the modern languages degree, and its nearest relative is the weekly small-group conversation session with a foreign language assistant. One could perhaps suppose that as far as spontaneity is concerned these two activities would be at opposite extremes. The conversation class - unquestionably a most valuable and highly-esteemed activity, with its own objectives and practices - is normally taken to be open-ended, participatory, spontaneous and wide-ranging; and it can at times be all of these, even when - and sometimes especially when - it is deliberately organised around a functional focus. In practice, because of variables such as personality factors, competing interests, adequacy of preparation, pressure of time, etc, the student participant, when expected to make a spontaneous contribution to the discussion, usually has a number of other options available, such as using prepared material, temporising, steering the discussion, avoiding difficult subjects, side-stepping awkward constructions, etc. In the interpreting situation, however, the student has much less room for manoeuvre: he has no control over the incoming message, and strictly speaking should have no influence upon the direction of the discussion; he is of course tied to the precise message, and is subject to the intellectual discipline of having to gauge possible formulations against the strict criterion provided by the speaker's actual utterance. He is also tied to the spontaneity of the speakers, who are normally expressing themselves in their mother tongue and reacting to other people. The content of the interpreter's output, therefore, is often more precise and can well have more essentially spontaneous features than are found in some conversation sessions. The translation seminar and the interpreting class provide a further interesting example of contrast and complementarity. Looking at a typical text for translation, one would normally expect it to be a more or less homogeneous communication: the conceptual approach and the range of discourse types, registers, textures and stylistic features are likely to fall within a fairly narrow band and of course to remain there, the context being static. In the case of free dialogue, however, all those same features, not to mention tone, colour, texture and content, can and often do vary in range rapidly and dramatically; if in addition one considers the interpersonal and the paralinguistic dimensions, it becomes clear that dialogue interpretation involves a peculiarly rich fund of linguistic and sociolinguistic relationships and therefore potential experiences.

As we have seen, the interpreting class has some of the features of the translation seminar and the conversation class; in particular it shares with the former a broadly similar objective and the opportunity to examine and evaluate alternative solutions, while with the latter it has in common the oral medium, an interest in current issues, and a concern with fluency and clarity. One obvious but very significant difference is that the interpreting class is usually conducted in a language laboratory, and therefore can, and generally does, involve a range of activities which demand intensive participation on the part of the students; this being so, whatever the type of exercise all the participants are faced with two more or less inescapable

obligations: firstly, to respond all the time, thus attempting to solve each and every problem set, and secondly to attempt a solution to the precise problem set. If the first obligation is met, all students should cover much the same ground and participate virtually all of the time. If the second obligation is faced seriously, the temptation to settle for an approximation or an avoidable paraphrase tends to be resisted, as the student interpreters are aware not only of the need for precision but also of the fact that their versions are likely to be reviewed and analysed straight away by the group, by the tutor or by another individual; being what they are, undergraduates will generally be keen to perform well in these circumstances. When an interpretation has been attempted and a performance is being reviewed, the ensuing group discussion usually produces an abundant crop of alternatives, nuances or 'near misses' - the sort of material which young and receptive minds are quick to sift and consign to semantic memory.

To judge from the interest it continues to generate and from the way it has spread since first appearing nearly twenty years ago, interpreting has established itself firmly in the undergraduate modern languages curriculum. Its appeal as a practical tool, a communication skill, an intellectual and personal discipline and a complement to other studies has long been obvious to many academics, while steadily growing numbers are also recognising the powerful contribution it can make to active, intensive learning of the spoken language.

Today, few who have taken a fresh look at the teaching of modern languages to undergraduates can seriously doubt that interpreting and many of the other applied language activities have earned their place in the curriculum. But the future contribution of these activities lies more in the opportunities they offer both within and beyond the current boundaries of modern languages and area studies. They challenge first the curriculum designers to remove artificial barriers and create new combinations within and across disciplines. They challenge also the teachers, whose task must surely be to develop increasingly efficient methodologies for a growing range of language teaching activities. And finally they challenge the providers and managers of resources to ensure that technology serves methodology effectively and economically.

NOTES

1. The chairman of the plenary session at which this paper was delivered, Professor Frank Willis, called for a show of hands to test this assumption. He asked how many lecturers present used interpreting - in any form - as a teaching activity in degree courses: 28 raised their hands. (As well as various other institutions and organisations, 34 universities and 14 polytechnics were represented at the conference.)

2. E.g. Bath, Bradford, PCL, Salford.

3. For example, UCCA league table analysts are quick to spot trends in demand, as expressed by movements in the A level grades required. Careers advisers in schools are keener than ever to interpret the small print in brochures, while sixth-formers who visit universities on open days or for interviews are more informed about course content and more inclined to ask pertinent questions than their counterparts of five or ten years ago. See, for example, Brian Heap's annual review, 'Degree Course Offers' (CRAC).

4. That is, skilled in handling abstract ideas, very knowledgeable in the subject areas which particularly interested their teachers, potentially capable of teaching or undertaking research in those same areas, competent in written expression in the mother tongue - and, in the case of linguists, in a foreign language - and possessed of the broad literary culture which marked the 'educated' person.

5. At the Bradford conference a plenary session and subsequent workshop meetings were devoted to discussion of the question 'How modern is the modern languages degree?'

6. The proposition is cogently argued by Richard Pollock in the preceding paper in this series. (Vide pp. 73-88)

7. This is not to undervalue the other applied language activities. Indeed, although interpreting has tended to attract most attention, they must all have contributed to the oral syllabus explosion. These activities, although in themselves discrete and separately examinable processes, are so flexible and adaptable that they can easily be made to complement, link, develop or serve other parts of the syllabus. In other words, they are a step nearer the Holy Grail of the syllabus designer - the integrated course, one in which each element deliberately takes cognizance of, serves and is served by all the others. (Here the view is taken that in the absence of the ideal situation - i.e. one where the student synthesises for himself the intellectual and cultural diet supplied by an adequate number of brilliant and exceptional tutors - it is desirable to work towards a planned, coherent syllabus.)

8. CHOMSKY, N: Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, MIT, 1965, p 3.

9. HYMES, D: 'On communicative competence', in Pride and Holmes, Sociolinguistics, 1972.

10. YALDEN, J: The Communicative Syllabus, Pergamon, 1983, p 12.

11. Hymes, p 281.

12. Bradford, for example, introduced the 'new' syllabus in 1964. For a useful early survey of how modern languages curricula were developing in higher education, see James and Rouve, Curricula and Performance in Modern Languages, CILT, 1973.

13. The standard diet - the one on which probably 90% of today's language teachers in higher education were brought up - seems to have varied very little this century. The traditional 'lang-lit' course consists of a weekly prose and translation, literary essays in the foreign language, literature, philology and civilization lectures, further assimilation of the foreign language by osmosis through extensive reading, and perhaps a weekly conversation class with a foreign language assistant.

14. Yalden, p 16.

15. As most linguists know to their cost, non-linguists - particularly employers - have long tended to expect language graduates straight from university to be capable of handling current or even specialised foreign language material, and even of interpreting for, say, foreign visitors. Until recently, of course, only very exceptionally would such an assumption be justified. But the spread of applied activities has meant that some graduates are in fact showing themselves to be increasingly capable of tackling these or similar tasks, or at the very least rapidly adapting to them. Are we approaching the time when a latter-day Samuel Butler would not be able to comment ruefully that 'the dons are too busy educating the young men to teach them anything'?

16. Standards in the traditional and familiar language activities are of course very well established, but for the newer activities it will be some time before a consensus emerges on the form and content of examinations and on performance criteria. Even so, for an activity to be justified within the framework of a degree course, one could expect it to satisfy two requirements: firstly, that the material it employs and the processes it entails should be both intellectually demanding and culturally substantial; and secondly, that the performance required of the candidate should resemble or be an adaption of a real-life application of that skill in a social, cultural, industrial, administrative or other situation. As an illustration one could take the example of interpreting in the final degree examinations at Bradford, where the aim has been to produce a reasonably realistic test of basic competence in interpreting. There are two tests for each honours language:

    a. Consecutive interpreting. The candidate is required to interpret

into and out of the foreign language a two-way dialogue delivered at normal conversational speed, involving a fairly wide range of types of discourse and lengths of utterance. The examination test lasts 20-30 minutes.

b. Simultaneous interpreting. The candidate is required to interpret simultaneously a speech delivered in the foreign language at normal conversational speed, chosen from a fairly narrow range of types of discourse. The examination test lasts 6-10 minutes.

In both tests the interpreter's version is expected to be reasonably accurate and contextually appropriate, promptly and acceptably presented. Both tests are conducted in the conference laboratory, each student's taped performance being subsequently assessed by a panel of examiners.

17. HALLIDAY, M A K: Languages as Social Semiotic, Arnold, 1978, p 21.

18. WILKINS, D A: Notional Syllabuses, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp 44-54.

19. A communicative syllabus based on a needs analysis for undergraduate language learning would have large areas in common with one devised for undergraduate student interpreters. But in view of the special need for actuality, spontaneity and flexibility in interpreting classes, the 'language' part of the interpreting syllabus would perhaps be more usefully expressed in outline only, serving indeed more as an occasional check-list than as a linear syllabus designed to be worked through systematically.

To take one small illustration of this approach: if the tutor noted that students had difficulty in recognising or expressing nuances in modals, it would be a simple matter to slip some examples into routine dialogue interpretation exercises (both into and out of the foreign language), so that over a period of a few weeks a range of items expressing various degrees of certainty, approval, commitment, support, etc. will have been covered. (See, for example, the categories in Chapter 2 of Wilkins (1976).)

20. Wilkins, p 23.

21. Yalden, p 20.

22. Milton, 'Il Penseroso', 120.

23. Halliday, loc cit.

24. To take the Bradford example alone, over 1000 graduates have qualified since interpreting was introduced as a compulsory element in the language core of the modern languages degree in 1964.

25. However, during the conference at which this paper was presented, several workshop sessions were devoted to detailed discussion of interpreting as a language-learning activity.

26. A peculiarity of the Bradford course is the timing of the year abroad. There are three phases: eighteen months at Bradford, then the year abroad, then a further eighteen months back at the University. Interpreting tuition (two hours a week per language) starts at the beginning of the second year.

27. Nearly one third of the 24 workshops at the conference were to a greater or lesser extent concerned with educational technology in advanced language teaching. Among other matters, workshops met to discuss field recordings of language material, teaching and testing in the advanced language teaching laboratory, future resources for language learning, the conference interpreting laboratory, exploiting video resources, direct broadcast satellite TV, and computer-assisted language learning.

28. For a brief description of the Bradford 12-booth conference laboratory (installed in 1976) see Griffiths, B T, 'Resources for training interpreters - a conference simulator', CNAA Report Resources for Modern Languages, CILT, 1979, pp 27-28.

    For an illustration of later developments, (two 12-booth conference laboratories installed in 1983) see 'Language Monthly', December 1983, pp 8-10.

29. For an illustration of this type of language laboratory, see 'Language Monthly', December 1982, p 10.

Appendix A

TABLE 2

Work-Scheme, Year II Interpreting*
BA Hons Modern Languages

Weeks 6-14 (Nov-Feb)
2 hours per week

Weeks 6-14

1. Every class starts with 5-15 min. session of live-voice 'quickies' in group for memory-only pair or solo work into and out of FL: short, miscellaneous news, information or comment items, some recapitulating or consolidating earlier work, others as 'primers' for more difficult items to come later. Length or difficulty increase as techniques and memory improve.

2. These warming-up and reflex-developing sessions are followed by one or more of:

a. Further notation practice: short to medium items (up to 1 minute in length), live voice source (tutor), range extending to include references to other work (contemporary society, translations, politics, practical aspects of the approaching year abroad, etc); occasional emphasis on specific micro-skills (eg. keywording, selection); occasional OHP review of notes (esp. layout, lists, symbols, abbreviations).

b. Longer taped or live anecdote or report (up to 2-3 minutes) with strong chronological or logical thread (hence fewer notes) in:
- LL, for solo work, review and criticism, or
- Group, for solo work and joint criticism

c. Longer speech (up to 2-3 minutes) mostly FL-E, occasionally E-FL, for:
- solo work in booth, including review, criticism and occasional re-working to produce a polished version; followed by group discussion.
- Similar exercise, but with pair criticism (ie. of partner's version by swapping tapes, plugging in headset to neighbour's machine and listening together, or by electronic pairing, for certain laboratories).

d. Two-language dialogue (live voice source: tutor and foreign language assistant, or student and tutor) in group around table, students taking turns to interpret consecutively. Occasionally record proceedings for subsequent review in groups or for private study in audio-workroom.

Two-language dialogue (audio or video source) all students work individually in LL booths; criticism and occasional re-working of own versions, with selective criticism by tutor; then group discussion of difficulties and solutions, either in 'group conference' mode in LL or out of booths round console,

with occasional OHP for notation problems and occasional loudspeaker version of a student's track.

(* Note. Consecutive only. Simultaneous is introduced in Year III).

Appendix B

TABLE 3

Work-Scheme, Years II and IV Interpreting
BA Hons Modern Languages

Year III, Weeks 15-20
2 hours per week

Year III
Weeks 15-16

1. Reintroduction. Review of objectives: the place of interpreting in the 'language-core'; the finals interpreting examinations (demonstration). Explanation of aim: to retain present fluency, to capitalise on experience abroad, and to develop the skills tested in the final examinations. Exercise in groups: short news item (eg. radio report of a summit meeting - agenda, personalities, incidents, critical issues, etc); all take notes, one student interprets solo; group discussion of problems (comprehension, selection, storage, notation, recall, presentation) and strategies for overcoming them.

2. Revision of note-taking technique. OHP of possible notes for the 'summit' news item; discussion of selection of key ideas, aptness of abbreviations, symbols, layout. Audio-workroom task: similar consecutive exercise, with worksheet for checking text afterwards.

3. Long consecutive exercise in LL (dual-purpose: to practise techniques while revising principles): 15-minute speech in FL on the principles of consecutive notation (clearly spoken and at a steady pace, but very prolix, with numerous repetitions, recapitulations, clarifications, etc.) solo versions in booths, own review and criticism (with tutor's help) checking content against worksheet issued. Task: take away worktapes, exchange with a partner and review partner's version before next class. In next class, invite comments on content and presentation in the version reviewed; illustrate where appropriate on loudspeaker. Inventory of strengths and weaknesses. Reminder of strategies for maximising progress: frequent practice, regular reading and listening, regular follow-up in audio-workroom, frequent critical review of notation, deliberate broadening of experience, occasional tutorials for stock-taking.

Year III
Weeks 17-20

1. As before, every class starts with a group 'quickies' session, but now the pair work is progressively giving way to solo performances, after each of which another student provides a short commentary on its accuracy and effectiveness.

2. LL and group exercises, similar in format to those in Table 2, 2 a-c, but with greater use of radio, audio and video recordings as source material.

3. Audio-workroom tasks:

a. study of designated two-track tape of an actual simultaneous interpretation: identify problems, linguistic devices employed, particularly successful/unsuccessful elements. Prepare to comment in class in Week 21.

b. Designated simultaneous exercise: interpret the speech without stopping the tape, review and criticise own version, using worksheet. (The speech to be interpreted is usually on a familiar theme; it could, for example, be the continuation of a speech already partly used as a consecutive exercise.)

Appendix C

TABLE 4

Work-Scheme, Years III and IV Interpreting
BA Hons Modern Languages

Year III, Weeks 21-26
Year IV, Weeks 1-25
2 hours* per week

Consecutive Interpreting

Year III
Weeks 21-26
Year IV
Weeks 1-25

1. As before, most classes begin with a group activity, a series of short items for prompt consecutive interpretation using memory alone, sometimes followed by longer items using notes. The ratio of FL and English utterances will vary, depending upon the nature of the topic, the aims of the lesson and the observed needs of the group. Increasing attention is paid to promptness, resourcefulness, accuracy, nuance, tone, contextual awareness and synthesis. Students will be expected to be increasingly strict and objective when criticising their own and others' versions during group and pair work.

2.

a. Exercises similar in format to those outlined in Table 2, 2 a-e, will continue to be used. By this stage they make increasing demands on the student's linguistic and

intellectual resources as well as on stamina and personality. Utterances vary in length from a short phrase to a 1-5 minute response.

b. In the warming-up session it is occasionally useful to abandon the usual deliberate heterogeneity and concentrate on a specific theme (e.g. alternative energy, EMS, CAP, parliamentary procedures, wage negotiations, disarmament, Middle East, information technology, etc.) sometimes with, sometimes without prior announcement. If at the beginning of Year IV a list of such themes is shared among all the students in a group, each individual undertaking to produce a short (50-150 words) glossary of useful terms relating to his particular theme, a given 'quickie' session can take the form of a dialogue between the tutor and the student 'expert' (that student's glossary serving as a basis for the exchanges); all such glossaries are subsequently be distributed to the whole group, after any necessary editing.

3. Other possible activities include:

a. Games and simulations involving two or more participants (perhaps from other academic areas) with interpretation into and out of the FL. (E.g. a press conference, a business discussion, a sales visit, an interview with an author, politician or economist, negotiations for a twin-towns event, a dispute on pay and conditions, a delegation pressing a list of complaints, etc.) Roles can be played by tutors, foreign language assistants, visitors or students.

b. Interpreting for visitors: all HE institutions receive academic or other visitors from abroad; such visitors are usually more than willing to be interviewed on the reasons for their journey and to talk about their own country. Whether the visitor genuinely needs interpretation or not (and many do, of course) for the student the experience of actually interpreting for a foreign visitor in an impromptu exchange is usually an unforgettable experience and a valuable stimulus.

c. Past examination material (normally not identified as such until after the exercise has been worked) is introduced during the final 12 weeks.

(* Note. 2 hours, shared with Simultaneous Interpreting, Table 5)

TABLE 5

Work-Scheme, Years III and IV Interpreting
BA Hons Modern Languages

Year III, Weeks 21-26
Year IV, Weeks 1-25
2 hours* per week

Simultaneous Interpreting (into English only)

Year III Week 21

1. Discussion of problems of simultaneous interpretation, based on experience of exercises completed in Weeks 18-20 (Table 3, 3a and b).

2. Straightforward LL exercise, 4-5 mins., based on 1 above, but delivered ad lib by tutor with occasional changes of detail: frequent redundancies, repetitions, clarifications, pauses for effect, theatrical touches, etc. Students review and criticise own versions, with help from tutor at console. Group discussion follows, with loudspeaker illustration of extracts from students' versions (generally, only good or otherwise especially interesting performances are demonstrated in this way).

Weeks 22-26

1. Similar exercises to 2 above (with 'priming' in previous class where appropriate) gradually increasing in length and density.

2. Audio-workroom exercises, at least one between each class. (Again, these could be a continuation of a speech already partly covered.)

Year IV Weeks 1-25

1. A steady progression of LL exercises, ranging from speeches delivered by the tutor, foreign language assistant or foreign visitor, audio and video recordings of speeches made by politicians, economists, spokesmen, interviewers, members of the public, media commentators, etc, on a range of social, political, economic and cultural affairs. By week 10, students will be coping with speeches of some 5-15 minutes delivered at a steady pace in a fairly standard accent.

2. Audio-workroom exercises. Similar material. At least one exercise between each simultaneous interpreting class.

3. As in the case of consecutive, actual past examination tests are introduced (unannounced) during the final 12 weeks.

(* Note. 2 hours, shared with Consecutive Interpreting, Table 4)